

Reach Out Now:



Talk with Your Fifth Grader About Underage Drinking

Teachers!

This program will help you meet national standards in science, health, language arts, and social studies!

Dear Teachers,

Taking action against underage drinking isn't easy, but knowledge is the first step. School is a great place to open a dialogue with students about alcohol. As you know, fifth grade isn't too early to start this kind of discussion. After all, research shows that underage drinkers number nearly 10.5 million youth, ages 12–20, and the average age of first use keeps dropping. This publication produced by Scholastic and targeted specifically to you—the fifth-grade teacher—can help you and your students, with their parents as partners, get the conversation started. Incorporate the information on these pages into your teaching curriculum. Remember to send the **Family Resource Guide** home with your students.

The benefits of classroom and at-home activities and discussions on this subject can last a lifetime and make a lifetime last.

*Tommy G. Thompson, Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*

Your students are at a critical age.

Young people start thinking about drinking sometimes years before they would ever consider trying it.¹ The earlier a child drinks alcohol, the more likely he or she is to develop alcohol dependency problems. The goal of the *Reach Out Now: Talk with Your Fifth Grader About Underage Drinking* program is to prevent underage drinking.

You can make a difference.

As a fifth-grade teacher talking with 10- and 11-year-olds every day, you have opportunities to influence their understanding of underage drinking. These Teacher Pages focus on three key actions you, as a teacher, can take:

- Provide your students with factual information about the effects of drinking alcohol.
- Encourage your students to use critical-thinking skills to make healthy decisions and to express themselves effectively.
- Build students' confidence in their decision-making skills by providing them opportunities to share their new knowledge with others.

Your students' families can help meet this challenge.

Families and caregivers also have the power to prevent underage drinking. Research shows that parents are the most powerful influence on youth behavior.² Parents' disapproval of underage alcohol use has been identified as the key reason children choose *not* to drink.³ The *Reach Out Now Family Resource Guide* identifies the six actions⁴ parents and caregivers can take to help children make wise decisions about the use of alcohol:

1. Establish and maintain good communication with your child.
2. Get involved and stay involved in your child's life.
3. Make clear rules and enforce them with consistency and appropriate consequences.
4. Be a positive role model.
5. Teach your child to choose friends wisely.
6. Monitor your child's activities.

Facts for Teachers

The Good News:

The majority of children and youths are not current drinkers. In fact, 60% of youths aged 12–17 haven't ever had a drink.⁵

Delaying Onset Is Key:

People who took their first drink before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependency than those who started after age 21.⁶

Easy Access to Alcohol:

In a survey of sixth graders, over half said it would be easy for someone their age to get alcohol at a party. And in a recent national survey, 75% of eighth graders said alcohol was "fairly easy" or "very easy" to get.⁷

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LESSONS

Use these three lessons in sequence. Build on students' understanding of the negative effects of alcohol to encourage them to make and articulate healthy decisions for themselves. Then, help them build their growing communication skills to share this knowledge with others.



1 Understanding the Effects of Alcohol

National Research Council, National Science Education Standards 5–8.6
Science in Personal and Social Perspectives—Personal Health, Risks and Benefits
Joint Committee for National School Health Education Standards
Standards 1, 3, 4

Key Action: Provide your students with facts about the effects of drinking alcohol.

Curriculum Connections: Life Science, Health

What Students Will Learn: Students will understand the effects of alcohol on a drinker's body.

Rationale: By fifth grade, most students have studied life science and the human body, and they are at a cognitive level to understand cause and effect and to think critically about information they are given. Knowledge of alcohol's effects can help them understand the importance of making healthy decisions about alcohol.

Materials Needed: Copies of **Understanding the Effects of Alcohol**, Reproducible, page 3.

Procedure: Ask about images of drinkers and the effects of drinking that students have seen portrayed in the media. Distribute the Reproducible. Read aloud the description of alcohol's effects, defining unfamiliar words and correcting students' misconceptions. Students should understand that drinking alcohol can result in a loss of control and can make drinkers do things they do not want to do. They should understand that alcohol affects different people in different ways and that even one drink can have life-threatening effects. List any questions students have on the chalkboard and assign teams of students to locate the answers in reference books.

Follow-Up: Ask students to complete the at-home activity **Alcohol: A True/False Quiz** (page 3 of the **Family Resource Guide**) with their families. Have them bring the Quiz into class and review the answers with them. Invite students to take the **Understanding the Effects of Alcohol** Reproducible home to share with their parents and caregivers.

2 Making Healthy Decisions

National Council of Teachers of English, International Reading Association
Standards for the English Language Arts—5, 12

Joint Committee for National School Health Education Standards
Standards 3, 5, 6

National Research Council, National Science Education Standards 5–8.6
Science in Personal and Social Perspectives—Personal Health, Risks and Benefits

Key Action: Encourage your students to use critical-thinking skills to make healthy decisions and to express themselves effectively.

Curriculum Connections: Health, Life Skills, Language Arts

What Students Will Learn: Students will analyze how they make decisions, practice refusal strategies, and discuss the consequences of saying “No” to a friend.

Rationale: Students at school are surrounded by peers for hours every day. Teachers can help students cope with peer selection and peer influence.

Materials Needed: **Making Healthy Decisions**, Reproducible, page 4.

Procedure: Explain to students that this role-playing lesson will help them:

1. Identify situations in which the decisions they make can affect their health.
2. Answer the question: What is the worst that can happen when you say “No”?
3. Develop refusal strategies that work.

Distribute the Reproducible. As you read through the page with students, share some of the steps that you follow when making a decision, such as *getting the facts, considering options, telling others your decision, and accepting their response*. Allow students time to complete the writing assignment on the Reproducible page. Then review student answers and select pairs of students to act out one of their dialogues. Discuss what might be the worst thing that can happen when you say “No.” Make sure students understand that saying “No” to a friend can have more than one outcome and that taking a stand about one's health can be more important than friendship.

Follow-Up: Have students take the Reproducible home and talk with their parents about the ways in which their family makes decisions.

3 Taking Action

National Council for Social Studies, Curriculum Standards for Social Studies—
Strands 5, 10

National Council of Teachers of English, International Reading Association
Standards for the English Language Arts—5, 7, 12

Key Action: Build your students' confidence in their decision-making skills by providing opportunities for them to plan and implement a community project.

Curriculum Connections: Social Studies, Language Arts

What Students Will Learn: Students will learn the basic steps and techniques involved in careful decision making.

Rationale: Research shows that youth who are involved in volunteer community service have lower rates of alcohol use than others.⁸ Community service projects can extend learning beyond the classroom and help students understand the value of collaboration and caring acts.

Materials Needed: Chalkboard, pens and paper, local newspaper.

Procedure: Divide students into small groups to brainstorm about a community service they can perform. Ask and answer broad questions first. What are some problems in our community? What resources are needed to solve them? Then narrow the scope. What could our class do about these problems? Suggestions might include: organizing a food drive to stock a food pantry or cleaning up a local park or school grounds. Answers might include: writing letters, attending community meetings, and contributing time. Integrate the class project into language arts, social studies, math, and life skills curricula. As you work on the service project, provide students with opportunities to reflect on their experiences in writing and discussion.

Follow-Up: Have students write individual letters to their parents or caregivers to explain the class's community service project and to ask for support in such areas as providing transportation and contacting local officials.

SOURCES: 1, 5 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), 2000. 2, 4 Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP), *Keeping Youth Drug-Free*, 2001. 3, 6 National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, *Make a Difference: Talk to Your Child About Alcohol*, 2000. 7 CSAP, *Prevention Primer: An encyclopedia of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug prevention terms*, Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1993. 8 Eccles, JS and Barber, BL. “Student council, volunteering, basketball, or marching band: What kind of extracurricular involvement matters?” *Journal of Adolescent Research* 14(1), 10–43, 1999. 9, 10 SAMHSA's National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI), *Tips for Teens: Alcohol*, 2000.

Understanding the Effects of Alcohol



Introduction:

You probably have seen people drinking alcohol in real life, on television, in videos, or in the movies. The alcohol might have been beer or wine. It may have been served in a glass, in a bottle, or in a can. On TV, in movies, in videos, people drinking alcohol may seem to be happy, rich, and famous. Some may seem silly. Some may appear sad, angry, or even violent. In real life, you may have seen people act in these ways when they have been drinking. Or maybe not. The truth is alcohol affects different people in different ways. But one thing is sure. Alcohol is very dangerous for a young person like you, and it is illegal, too.

Check Your Alcohol IQ:

Did you know that just about every part of your body reacts to alcohol if you drink it? Read to see how alcohol affects the body.

Put a check mark next to things you did not know.

- ☐ With the first sip of alcohol, a drinker is affected.
- ☐ Alcohol passes through the lining of the stomach into the bloodstream. It irritates the stomach lining, which can make the person feel sick. If drinking continues, the person will throw up.
- ☐ Alcohol moves through the bloodstream to every organ in the body, including the brain.
- ☐ Once alcohol enters the brain, it changes the way a person behaves. Alcohol makes people do things they do not want to do.
- ☐ As a person drinks more alcohol, the ability to make decisions is affected. By drinking more and more alcohol, a person may lose balance and be unable to see or speak clearly. The more a person drinks, the worse the effects can be.
- ☐ Alcohol can have lasting effects. It can hurt how well a person does in school, in sports, and even in playing video games.
- ☐ Alcohol can kill. When a person drinks too much alcohol in too short a time, alcohol poisoning can occur. Breathing gets difficult. The person can throw up, pass out, or even die.⁹
- ☐ Some people think they cannot live without alcohol. They are called alcoholics. They drink more and more as their bodies get used to alcohol. But they can be helped to stop and to recover.

Remember: Just one drink can have serious effects.

Your age, your weight, your height, and your gender all will affect how you react to alcohol. For young people whose bodies are still developing, the effects of even a little alcohol can be worse than they are for older people.¹⁰



Making Healthy Decisions

Activities:

1. *With other students in your class, choose one of the following health-threatening situations or think of another situation that could be harmful to your health.*

An older friend dares you to:

- Ride a bike without a helmet
- Run across a multi-lane highway
- Hitchhike
- Drink a beer

2. *Write your answers to the questions below. Use the back of this page if you need more room.*

How would you decide whether or not to do what your friend is asking?

What would be the healthiest decision in each case?

What might happen if you said "Yes"?

What's the best and worst that might happen if you said "No"?

3. *Pick a strategy from the List of "No's" in the box to the right. Then finish this dialogue:*

Friend: So, do you want to _____?
[Write in the situation you chose.]

You: No. Are you _____? My parents would lock me up.

Friend: You are such a baby. Come on. They won't find out.

You: _____

Friend: _____

You: _____

The List of "No's"

Here are some of the many ways to say "No."

Repeat: "No, I don't want to."
"No thanks." "No, I can't."

Justify: "I can't. I have to _____." [Make an excuse.]

Substitute: "No, let's _____." [Substitute another activity.]

Walk Away: "No. I have to go."

Your teacher will ask you to pair up and read your dialogue with a classmate.

Remember to make eye contact; speak clearly; and be confident.

Which way of saying "No" worked best, in your opinion? Why was it effective?



Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
SAMHSA

CSAP Center for Substance Abuse Prevention